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SUBJECT: Jordan Takes Major Step in Its Education Initiative

1. (U) SUMMARY: The Jordanian Cabinet approved an \$80 million project as the first step in the provision of providing broadband connectivity to all learning centers in the country. The centerpiece of the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI), launched by King Abdullah at the World Economic Forum (WEF) on June 21, the broadband project will transform ninety-six "Discovery Schools" into model facilities where information and communication technologies (ICT) are innovatively integrated with education. The JEI relies heavily on US private sector participation for both project formulation and implementation during the preliminary stages. END SUMMARY

2. (U) On June 19, 2003 the Jordanian Cabinet approved an \$80 million project as part of its Jordan Broadband Learning and Educational Network. The proposed broadband network initiative would upgrade the existing ADSL network, currently connecting 1000 schools, by laying 5000 kilometers of fiber to supply up to one gigabyte connection speed. The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MOICT) hopes to have the 8 public universities wired by September 2003, and the remaining 3000 schools, 23 community colleges and 75 learning stations by fall 2006.

3. (U) During the final WEF Digital Divide Task Force meeting in January 2003, a roundtable of IT and telecom leaders selected Jordan to spearhead an education initiative. The JEI was the final project of the WEF Digital Divide Task Force before its three year mandate expired. King Abdullah officially launched the JEI at the Extraordinary Annual Meeting of the WEF at the Dead Sea on June 21, with IT luminaries Hewlett Packard CEO Carly Fiorina and Sun Microsystems Chief Researcher John Gage in attendance.

4. (U) The JEI has three tracks: Discovery Schools, Lifelong Learning, and Jordan ICT Industry Development. The Discovery Schools track is designed to construct and test a new model of ICT-enabled learning that other developing countries can replicate. The initiative uses ninety-six schools as pilots to demonstrate how ICT can facilitate learning, creativity and innovation. The GOJ has partnered with the Cisco Learning Institutes to develop an e-curriculum, Intel to provide teacher training, and Hewlett Packard to provide the in-classroom technology, with other companies providing a variety of additional support. The GOJ challenged its private sector partners to invent bold ways of utilizing technologies in the Discovery Schools to facilitate educational reform in Jordan. The Lifelong Learning and ICT Industry Development tracks are still being formulated.

5. (U) Emile Cubeisy, Chief Information Officer at the MOICT, expressed his appreciation to EconOff for the strong level of participation from US private sector companies in the Jordan Education Initiative. He stressed the sustainability of the JEI, citing an agreement between Cisco and the GOJ that provides Cisco with a royalty from software that is developed and sold as a result of the JEI. He also noted that USAID funded programs such as INTAJ (Jordanian IT business association) and INJAZ (a youth entrepreneurship program) were playing a role in the JEI.

6. (U) COMMENT: The MOICT plans to showcase the JEI at the upcoming UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and is actively working with its Irish counterparts to determine if the JEI can be used as a model for the broader Irish and Swedish E-Schools initiative. Although the MOICT is beginning to implement the JEI, the success of the initiative will not be evident by the time of the WSIS. However, by December 2003, the private sector participants will have cemented their contributions to the JEI, and their willingness and methodology for engagement in this innovative educational reform program will be apparent. END COMMENT.

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